

Haru; Spring Flower.

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AMONG the bright faces in our school for Japanese girls, that of one modest, rosy-cheeked maiden always attracted every eye.

Her name, "Haru," signified Spring, with all the sweet associations bound up in this expressive word—joy, flowers, blossoming life; and this poetic name proved a true pledge of the fresh loveliness of her character, and of the bright inspiration it became to others.

Haru was born in a Southern province of Japan, and her childhood was passed amid the

sunny hills and green valleys of that picturesque portion of the country.

Her father was a man of wealth and influence, and gave to his children, two daughters and one son, the advantages of such education as could be had in the best native schools.

But the book Haru loved most to study was the book of Nature, and she passed much of her time out of doors, enjoying in all its aspects the scenery of her land, its fertile fields and distant mountain ranges ; and, though familiar, as all Japanese children are, with the wild, dark legends which place every element and locality under the charge of some special dragon deity, she refused to be afraid. The "Sun-God," and "Moon-Goddess," or the "Rain-and-Thunder-Gods," who live in clouds, and sometimes reach out an angry paw to strike fatal blows, were familiar names, but she had an innate sense of truth which made such stories seem as idle tales.

What was lacking in these sunny days of youth

to make Haru truly contented and happy? She had unconsciously lost faith in idol-gods, and, never having heard of the true God and Jesus Christ, her heart was hungering and thirsting for something to satisfy its cravings. This is the true condition of many of the "daughters of Japan" at the present time.

But there came a change in Haru's home, and, by the overthrow of "the old Feudal system," her father's wealth was suddenly exchanged for poverty, and he was forced to remove to the capital city of TOKIO, seeking work by which to maintain his family.

Haru was then only thirteen, but a desire sprung up in her heart to study our sweet mother-tongue; and, hearing of the American ladies who had come across the sea on purpose to instruct and care for Japanese girls, she came with her younger sister a short ride by the new railroad to Yokohama, and presented herself at our Mission-Home, asking to be taught.

How my heart throbbed with joy to receive her. Waiting patiently many months for just such scholars from the higher classes, this was the first glimpse of encouragement. Here was indeed Haru, my flower of Spring! Her personal appearance was peculiarly attractive, her cheeks bloomed with health, and the light of intellect brightened her eye.

We plodded on patiently together day after day. I knew little at first of Japanese, and she nothing of English ; but we established a heart-language, which both readily understood. Very gradually God the Father, Christ the Saviour, were revealed to Haru's young heart. Heaven was opened to her wondering vision ; she embraced the promises, and a new life dawned upon her in its joy and beauty. With a good memory and a persevering determination to acquire heavenly Wisdom, she studied God's Word unremittingly, and seemed taught by the Holy Spirit from its sacred pages.

Her mathematical talent was rapidly developed, and comforted me much, for its utter absence in other Japanese students. She received and rejected two offers of marriage from young men of culture and position, persistently saying : " No ! my life is devoted to Jesus and his work ! " She was now assisting us in school, was a beloved member of the " Union Church," under the Rev. Mr. Ballagh, in Yokohama, and wished to devote herself to her own country-women.

Two years ago her lungs became affected; still she remained at school ; but, oh ! how my heart ached when the conviction forced itself upon me that she was gradually declining. After the last summer vacation, the physician prescribed perfect freedom from care and study, and she returned to her home, where through her sweet example and teaching, her mother became a Christian. Thus a mother's sympathy and love were sources of comfort and joy to Haru in all her sickness. They read the Bible, sang and

prayed together; the lamp of Faith was ever trimmed and burning, and the oil of God's mercy was inexhaustibly supplied.

One Saturday, in spring-time, I was impressed with the idea that I must visit Haru, but other duties pressed upon me, and my intention was deferred. Monday my immediate attendance was requested, and, taking the next train, I arrived at six o'clock. The Angel was there, hovering over Haru, and his seal was upon her brow, but sweet peace, which the world can neither give nor take away, rested upon her face. I said, "Are you comforted, my dear? Is Jesus with you?" "Yes—yes," she replied, "the Saviour is always with me!"

I shall ever be grateful that I spent that last night with Haru. She taught me, her teacher, many lessons of faith and trust, and we had sweet communion in a room soon to be the portal of heaven to a soul set free! She sang the hymns first learned in our "Mission-Home,"

“Happy Land” and “Jesus Loves Me,” sometimes in English and sometimes in Japanese. Of all that passed I can tell but little, but I saw that a young life had blossomed into heavenly beauty, and was meet to be transplanted to a more congenial soil and atmosphere. Her last word, as she looked up brightly to heaven, was, in her childhood’s tongue,

“ARIGATAI, ARIGATAI !” “*Thankful, Thankful !*”

A volume in a word ! Thankful to and for Christ, thankful for rest and home, thankful for Life and glory ! It was the first note of the angels’ song of thanksgiving.

Haru was laid to sleep upon a hill-side from whence the murmuring sea, which binds all lands together, can be heard and seen. The cemetery was in cultivated ground, and the yellow flowers of the rape seed were turned with the earth whose bosom received her form ; and so, under the golden bloom, we planted this bright morning flower of the resurrection.

“Spring-time of the year” and “Day-spring from on high” are the associations that will always come to mind when we recall Haru—first fruit gathered to Jesus of the many dear girls who have since believed on His Name.

“I beheld; and, lo! a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.’”

“Blessing and glory, and Wisdom, and THANKSGIVING, be unto our God for ever and ever. AMEN.”

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